

into the omnibus bill text. He should go one step further and veto any omnibus bill that explicitly has earmarks.

In the past six months, Congress has enacted a \$700 billion financial bailout and a \$1.1 trillion stimulus. I say it is time to end the culture of pork, and stop spending money that our children will have to pay back in the future.

SOLVING AMERICA'S HEALTH CARE PROBLEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) for 5 minutes.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, for the first time in 15 years we have a real chance to solve America's health care crisis. The stars are aligning as has never been seen before. The American people want a solution, American business needs a solution to stay competitive and retain their best employees, segments of the health care industry, such as doctors, want a solution, and the President and the Congress have started a dialogue. Yet despite all those positive signs, we must not make the mistake of believing a solution is at hand or that it will come easily.

As a nation we stand at a crossroads, either sweeping reform or sweeping this crisis under the rug with another Band-Aid. We have to translate the national dialogue into legislation that makes access to affordable health care coverage what it must be in a free and Democratic society, a right and not a privilege.

There are lot of pieces to that puzzle and some are more readily solved more than others. In fact, I think some early victories might help instill confidence in the American people. Let me give you an example.

When I graduated from medical school, I was \$500 in debt after my entire medical education. Today, the average medical student is well over \$100,000 in debt. When you are underwater by that much money, you are forced to make decisions based on debt service, not on public service. Across America, from inner-cities to rural communities, we are woefully short of primary doctors. And as long as new doctors have to chase high paying jobs to pay off their debt, we are going to remain short staffed in these underserved areas in our country.

Today I am introducing legislation that would offer scholarships that would pay for most all of tuition for medical students in public colleges if they will apply their medical training in underserved areas when they graduate; an even exchange, one year of tuition for one year of service.

The American Medical Association says there were 45,000 students enrolled last year in public medical colleges and the mean cost of tuition was \$20,000. For a total investment of less than \$1 billion per year, my legislation would provide a workforce so that every American can have access to affordable

health care wherever they live. The scholarships would be accessible to a medical student enrolled full time and in good academic standing at a public institution.

Imagine the positive impact that we would have if we empowered new doctors to serve their country and the highest ideals of their profession instead of serving their debt load. It is important to make the financial commitment at the beginning of medical school so that students can study areas that are related to primary care.

Anyone who knows me knows I have long advocated a universal health care system, providing a minimum set of benefits for everyone. But we cannot get universal coverage or any interim step on the way to universal coverage without addressing, and reducing, the cost of health care education for our doctors.

We could make a significant impact by lowering the cost of the health care workforce if my bill were accepted. But we would do something else. There are a lot of talented young people who don't have the financial means to go to medical school and fear a crushing debt burden even if they qualify. By removing that mountain of debt, we could use that rock to build a foundation for a permanent solution.

We can solve America's health care problem and we can do it before the end of this year, but this is a first step that must happen. We must think about the workforce that will provide that universal access to everyone in the country. We cannot continue with the present funding of health care education and expect that we are going to have the people to provide the primary care, to do the wellness care, to do the prevention. They will all go into high-paid specialties to pay off their debt.

This bill is a step that we must take, and it is one where we can make a step forward for all the people in this country.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 50 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BLUMENAUER) at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

Today we bless You and praise You Lord for friends. Friendship is a gift, Lord, freely given by one person to another. Not merited, not purchased,

never manipulated, never demanded, friendship is uncovered in mutual self-revelation and common exchange. Desirous of the comfort found in another's companionship and tested by time, friendship spontaneously grows from within.

Friends truly know who we are. Friends stand with each other in good times and in bad times. True friends tell the truth without ever hurting. We steer friends away from what is wrong and seek only what is good for their friends.

Lord, strengthen Members of Congress with friends who will prove faithful no matter what transpires. Give them friends who will support them when they are right in spite of pressure from others and who will correct them when they are wrong no matter who agrees with them.

A friend may not change your taste, your reading, or your opinion, but a true friend will change what you long for and what you love. As different as they are from each other, true friends will accept each other as they are and share their differences—until they simply enjoy being together.

Lord, for lasting friends of the past, those we hold in friendship now and those we are yet to meet, we thank You, both now and forever. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. FOXX led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed concurrent resolutions of the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. Con. Res. 4. Concurrent resolution calling on the President and the allies of the United States to raise the case of Robert Levinson with officials of the Government of Iran at every level and opportunity, and urging officials of the Government of Iran to fulfill their promises of assistance to the family of Robert Levinson and to share information on the investigation into the disappearance of Robert Levinson with the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

S. Con. Res. 10. Concurrent resolution congratulating the Sailors of the United States Submarine Force upon the completion of